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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Despite Security Council demand that Croatia halt its "interference" in Bosnia and Herzegovina, some 5,000 Croatian troops still believed to be in Bosnia, Secretary-General says in letter to Security Council.

+ Special Representative for former Yugoslavia, after meetings with Bosnian Serb and Muslim leaders and head of NATO Southern Command, says much progress is being made towards achieving durable cease-fire, disarmament and disengagement in and around Sarajevo.

+ Secretary-General meets with delegation from FMLN; discusses with them El Salvador's upcoming elections, reintegration of combatants and future ONUSAL role, among other issues.

+ Commission of Experts on grave breaches of international humanitarian law in the former Yugoslavia, holds 11th session in Geneva; final report to be submitted to Secretary-General at end of April.

+ Plight of indigenous peoples actually worsened during International Year of World's Indigenous People, Goodwill Ambassador Rigoberta Menchu Tum tells Commission on Human Rights.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has informed the Security Council in a letter dated 18 February (S/1994/190) that, despite a Council demand that Croatia halt its "interference" in Bosnia and Herzegovina, some 5,000 Croatian Army troops are still believed to be in that country. He said that the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) had observed some soldiers leaving on 10 February, and on 15 February a senior Croatian official had stated that elements would withdraw from the Neretva River region the following day, but no such troop movements had been observed. Also, no action had been taken regarding the proposed establishment of a monitoring mechanism to verify troop withdrawals.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali said that no Croatian Army (HV) command posts nor any full HV brigades had been identified, but it appeared that HV troops were now

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being more circumspect. They might be removing their HV insignia while in Bosnia and Herzegovina, he said, and UNPROFOR believed that HV insignia on a number of vehicles had been erased or repainted.

The Security Council demanded on 3 February that Croatia withdraw its troops and military equipment from Bosnia and Herzegovina or face "serious measures", and requested the Secretary-General to report to it within two weeks on progress made towards compliance.

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Yasushi Akashi, the Special Representative of the Secretary General for the former Yugoslavia, said today that significant agreement had been achieved with respect to the current situation in and around Sarajevo. He was addressing the press after he and General Jean Cot, Force Commander of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) met this morning in Sarajevo with Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, and later in Zagreb with the Commander in Chief of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Southern Command. It appeared, he said, that much progress was being made towards achieving a durable cease-fire, disarmament and disengagement, with a very clear-cut role in the process for the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR).

Mr. Akashi there was agreement with Dr. Karadzoc about having very extensive UNPROFOR patrolling within the weapons exclusion zone of 20 kilometres from the centre of Sarajevo, with full freedom of movement assured for the patrols. They had also reached agreement with regard to communications, with the full assurance that hot-lines would be established between UNPROFOR and the Bosnian Serb and Muslim sides. Those heavy weapons which were not withdrawn from the exclusion zone would be grouped and placed in seven different sites, under the control UNPROFOR armed elements, "so that there will not be any possibility of their being taken away", he said.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali met yesterday evening with a delegation from the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN), including Joaquín Villalobos and Salvador Samayoa, members of the the Political Committee. According to a United Nations spokesman, the FMLN raised four main issues: the forthcoming change of government and the future of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL); the conduct of the electoral process; reintegration programmes for ex-combatants, including transfers of land; and public order, including the phasing in of the new National Civil Police and the phasing out of the old National Police.

The Secretary-General informed the delegation that he had written recently to President Alfredo Cristiani raising a number of concerns, particlarly regarding public order and reintegration of ex-combatants. The spokesman said Mr. Boutros-Ghali very much hoped that the President would continue to exert his personal authority in the coming months before his term expired to push ahead the implementation of all remaining commitments in the

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peace accords. The Secretary-General reaffirmed to the FMLN delegation the high importance he attaches to the success of the efforts under way in El Salvador under the auspices of the United Nations.

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The Commission of Experts, established to provide the Secretary-General with its conclusions on the evidence of grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and other violations of international humanitarian law in the former Yugoslavia, held its eleventh session in Geneva on Wednesday. The commission approved an outline of its final report, which it plans to submit to the Secretary-General at the end of April. Before that date, it is also to to finalize arrangements for the transfer of information in its possession to the international criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia which will be meeting in the Hague.

At this session, the expert body considered reports on preliminary investigations of mass graves in United Nations Protected Areas in Sector East and Sector West. It also reviewed the progress made in the ongoing investigations into destruction of cultural property and other violations of international humanitarian law, and into sexual assaults, torture and detention camps, as well as grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions.

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The plight of indigenous peoples in the world had actually worsened during 1993, the International Year of the World's Indigenous People, Rigoberta Menchu Tum, United Nations Goodwill Ambassador of the International Year, told the Commission on Human Rights at a meeting in Geneva earlier this week. Ms. Menchu, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992, said the Year had laid the basis for communication between Governments, institutions and indigenous peoples, yet genocidal practices by Governments the world over persisted. Indigenous peoples had no wish to destabilize States or to supplant Governments, she said, and their impulse to self-determination was an opportunity to avoid conflict.

She added that in Chiapas, Mexico, serious violations of human rights had occurred recently. At her proposal, an Indigenous Initiative for Peace had been established in Chiapas, which had travelled in the area, hearing complaints of human rights abuses from the indigenous peoples and talking to State and Church officials. At a press conference on 27 January, the violations of human and constitutional rights were announced, and details and recommendations were presented to Mexican President Salinas. The Indigenous Initiative, which had been created to work within the International Decade, had had a useful impact in terms of peace, monitoring and direct dialogue.

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